



Ohio Senate Education Committee

Testimony on SB 205

Liz Henrich
Associate Chief Executive Officer
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities
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Chairman Brenner, Vice-Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Ingram, and members of the Senate Education Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony on Senate Bill 205. My name is Liz Henrich, and I am an Associate CEO with the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities. We represent Ohio's Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Boards.

I am writing to express our support for SB 205 and the proposed modifications that would further ingrain evidence-based prevention and education programs addressing drugs of abuse within school health curricula.

We know that prevention, education, and early intervention strategies can reduce the impact of substance use and mental disorders in communities. Many prevention programs and professionals in communities throughout Ohio have worked diligently to ensure that youth, family members, and organizations that engage with youth have the information and materials they need to provide education with the aim of reducing underage drinking and substance use.

This bill updates the current requirements in Ohio law to require annual instruction and include marijuana on the list of topics. Both of these additions will allow for more robust, developmentally appropriate instruction on the harmful effects of drugs of abuse for school-age children throughout Ohio.

We are supportive of the provision that partners the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce with the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to review available resources and develop a list of evidence-based curricula, materials, programs, and instructional strategies. This strategy to partner the state's leaders on education and prevention to put forward resources to schools and communities will lead to an effective distribution of materials and information to schools as they work to implement these programs.

We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that Ohio's school-age children are able to access behavioral health services and supports when and where they need them. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Should you have any questions, please contact me at ehenrich@oacbha.org.